If you like crawfish and passin' a good time, Breaux Bridge is the place to be when the city hosts the 29th annual Breaux Bridge Crawfish Festival, today through Sunday.

Two routes into Breaux Bridge make for less traffic congestion, says Kathleen Hebert, president of the Breaux Bridge Crawfish Festival Association. From Lafayette on I-10, take Exit 109 and turn right onto Rees Street. Parc Hardy is two miles down on the left. When taking the old Highway 94, turn right at the intersection of Mills and Rees upon entering Breaux Bridge and the park is one-half block down. Downtown activities are centered around Main and Bridge streets.

Downtown Breaux Bridge has no set schedule of events from 5 p.m. today until 3 a.m. Saturday, and again from Saturday at 8 a.m. until 3 a.m. Sunday, you are invited to stroll down Bridge and Main streets and get your fill of good Cajun food and bands.

Eight outdoor stages set up throughout the downtown area will feature over 20 bands, including G.G. Shinn, Clearwater, Basin Brothers, Krosbyfrye, Wayne Toups, Motivations, Andy Smith, Cajun Breakdown and Uptown Express. Thousands of pounds of crawfish will be cooked almost every way possible. Festival goers will be able to sample crawfish etouffee, crawfish pies, crawfish jambalaya, crawfish hot dogs, crawfish housten, fried crawfish, soft shell crawfish, and of course, boiled crawfish.

"Approximately 50,000 people are expected to attend the festival," said Renee Simon, publicity chairman for the Breaux Bridge Crawfish Festival Merchants Association, Inc. Breaux Bridge has a population of 8,000.

Parc Hardy, located one-half block past the intersection of Mills and Rees streets, will also be a festival site, with a schedule of activities that will run from Thursday night through Sunday. Admission into the park is $1 for adults, with children under 12 admitted free. Hands will be stamped, allowing visitors to come and go throughout the day. At 3 p.m., today, festival booths will open and arts and crafts will go on sale. "Parc Hardy is a more traditional Cajun celebration. It's what Breaux Bridge is all about," explained Hebert. She added that the emphasis would be on local music and crafts, with plenty of good Cajun food.

Two of the uniquely Cajun recipes that will be sold at the festival are crawfish empanadas and crawfish chimichanga. Crawfish empanadas are crawfish tarts coated with onion and pepper, rolled in bread crumbs and deep fried. They are served with a white sauce. El Toro's will be serving crawfish chimichangas, a flour tortilla mixed with Mexican rice and crawfish, rolled and deep fried and served with chile con queso sauce. It will also be serving a crawfish taco.

Opening ceremonies are scheduled for 5 p.m. with a performance by the Barksdale Air Force Band. "We are expecting a bigger crowd than last year, with over 35,000 schedules distributed in advance and a large out-of-state promotional push," said Hebert.

HIGHLIGHTING THIS WEEKEND'S ACTIVITIES AT THE PARK WILL BE A CELEBRITY CRAWFISH-EATING CONTEST, A PEELING CONTEST BETWEEN LOCAL CRAWFISH PACKING PLANT PEELERS, CRAWFISH RACES FEATURING TWO FAVORITES, JAMBALAYA JAZZ AND CRAWDADDY, AND A FAVORITE SPECTATOR SPORT, THE CRAWFISH EATING CONTEST.

Saturday, May 6
8:15 a.m. - Band: Kermit Venable, Heritage Tent
10 a.m. - Parade
11 a.m. - Band: Paul Daigle and Cajun Gold, Main Stage
1 p.m. - Crawfish Peeling Contest, Heritage Tent
2 p.m. - Band: Buffalo and Cajun Connection, Main Stage
4 p.m. - Crawfish Races, Heritage Tent
5 p.m. - Band: D.L. Menard & Blackie Perssitter, Heritage Tent
6 p.m. - Dance Contest Band: Keith Huval & Acadiana Breakdown, Main Stage
8:30 p.m. - Band: Mamou, Main Stage
11 p.m. - Band: Wayne Toups & The Zydecajun, Main Stage

Sunday, May 7
9 a.m. - Festival Booths/Arts & Craft Show and Sale
9 a.m. - Band: Pat Breaux & Jonny Frisbie, Heritage Tent
9:30 a.m. - Crawfish Etouffee Cooking Contest, Heritage Tent
11 a.m. - Band: Johnny Stommel & Cajun Heritage, Main Stage
12:30 p.m. - Crawfish Parachute Jump (free prize tickets released from plane)
1 p.m. - Mayor's Invitational Race, Heritage Tent
1:30 p.m. - Band: The Jam-balaya Cajun Band, Main Stage
4 p.m. - Band: Cajun Brew, Main Stage